

MIDSUMMER NUMBER--AUGUST.

THE COMMONS

A Monthly Record Devoted to Aspects of Life and Labor from the Social Settlement Point of View.
ENTERED AT CHICAGO P. O. AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER.

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CHICAGO.

AUGUST, 1899.

[FOR THE COMMONS:]

"NO WORK."

By ABBIE W. GOULD.

I walked the street for many a day,
To seek for work at any price.
I sought to drive the fiend away,
Who held my loved in clutch-like vise.
I asked of this "boss," and of that,
Until my face familiar grew,
And yet I heard each morning said,
"We have no work to give to you."

I walked again, and pondered much,
That I, who held a place so long,
When laid aside, I could not touch
The cords of help, to hold me strong;
I saw that strangers from abroad
Could get the places held in view,
And yet my asking, said each "lord,"
"We have no work to give to you."

No work for head, no work for hands,
When wife and children fainting cry,
With gold and silver, fruitful lands,
And men must eat, or men must die;
Or men must beg a pittance small,
And thus their pride and manhood sue,
For ever do the "Fates" still call,
"We have no work to give to you,
We have no work to give to you."

Oh, Christos! who the people fed,
And gave to all with bounteous hand,
Where has the brotherhood e'er led,
To follow Thee in any land?
My house, my wife, my children dear,
Shall have all blessings that's their due,
But have my way 'tis very clear,
"We have no work to give to you,
We have no work to give to you."

The day is long, but God is just,
And recompenses each to each.
And take His "fiat" each man must,
As he did practice, not did preach;
And some day when the poor of earth
In Heaven's joys shall life renew,
They will not hear in higher birth,
"We have no work to give to you,
We have no work to give to you."

Moline, Ill., Jan., 1899.

"There is hardly as yet anywhere in America that neighborhood life which made it easy for the weavers of Rochdale and the shoemakers of Kettering, who had known each other almost from childhood, to get together."—Henry D. Lloyd in "Labor Co-Partnership."

WORKINGMAN AND MERCHANT

Dramatic Scene at a Meeting in Chicago Commons.

Concentration of Distribution Interpreted from the
Mechanic's Point of View.—Right
Relationship League.

THE sands of time are strewn with the wreckage of efforts by men, singly or in groups, sometimes in whole communities and nations, to ignore, to stem or to divert the tide of human development. They have been religious, political, social, economic; they have taken the form of edicts, laws, revolts and voluntary organizations. From the day of King Canute, bidding the advancing waves to cease and go back, or of the fabled sweeper who sought to force cessation and retreat with a broom, even until now and beyond into the future, this procession of well-meaning but futile attempts to command the eternal laws of destiny, is without break or halt. Force, manifesto, law, education and voluntary association, save in the line of and in accordance with the immutable interplay of physical and social facts and forces, alike fail and will fail.

A DRAMATIC scene in the Chicago Commons Tuesday meeting, not long ago, illustrated and emphasized the situation. A representative of the Chicago Retail Merchants' Association was speaking on the Department Store question, which just then was particularly under public notice. He drew a tragic picture of the destruction of the small trader under the giant force of concentrated competition, and pointed to the fact of the 7,000 and more of vacant stores in Chicago, formerly occupied by small merchants who commanded neighborhood trade.

"We appeal to you, workingmen," he cried, "by all that is sacred in the brotherhood of sympathy, by the memory of the long, cold winters of unemployment during which the corner grocer has given you credit without which you and your family would have starved;

to you as neighbors, friends, fellow-men, by your influence, your votes, your trade, your co-operation—to help the retail merchant in his battle to the death with the forces of concentrated greed!"

It was a pathetic and eloquent appeal, stirring every hearer with a new sense of the desperateness of the situation. A gray-headed workingman arose in the back of the room, still grimy with the smoke and oil of his day's work, from which he had come without his supper, eager to discuss these questions so vitally involving his life and the life of his class. Said he:

"This is a stirring appeal, before which a harder heart than mine might melt. Our brother from the retail grocery has not overstated the situation. But he forgets one important thing. My friend, twenty-five, thirty, forty years ago, the concentration of capital in machinery began to crowd down and eat up men of my class. Then we mechanics of every grade and class cried out to you to help us in our plight. The tools that we owned were supplanted by machinery, of which we did not and could not own or control so much as a screw. Our skill, our experience, our faithfulness, counted for nothing against the process of cutting down cost of manufacture, throwing out men because one could do what ten had done. Women, girls, and even little children took our places in the shops. We pleaded with you just as you plead now with us, for help, by voice and influence and trade and votes. And you laughed at us, and told us it was Progress and Economic Law and Survival of the Fittest which had overtaken us! You bade us be industrious and sober and thrifty, and to find other employment! And you were right, though you little knew how truly right you were. We organized against the thing, and sought legislation, and boycotted it, and fought it with influence, and with pleadings, and sometimes with shotguns. It was all in vain."

"Now, sir, it is your turn," cried the workman, with rising voice and pointing index finger. "Progress and Economic Law and Survival of the Fittest have overtaken you, and your appeals and protests and battle-cries will be alike in vain. As the old-fashioned epitaph used to say:

Look on me as you pass by—
As you are now so once was I.
As I am now so you must be;
Prepare for death and follow me!

"We bear you no malice, Mr. Merchant, but we understand perfectly whither you are head-

ed. And there is no help for you. Now, to prove our good will, I am going to introduce a resolution in your behalf. Mr. Chairman, I move the adoption of the following resolution:

*Whereas, Misery loves company, therefore,
Resolved, That we welcome the retail merchant to the ranks of the unemployed.*

MORE and more clearly is it coming to be understood on all hands that the Process so graphically depicted by the workingman, quoted above, is inevitable, pitiless, unceasing, and that before its onward march nothing human can stand. And as men more clearly see the futility of resistance, they are adapting themselves to the state of things with varying emphasis according to their bent of mind. Some, fortunate in the blind dealing of the cards of success, and tender-hearted at sight of the destruction of life, organize to help the less fortunate to "make the best of things as they are," to pick up the maimed, comfort the dying, and bury the dead in the frightful strife of monopolistic development which fills the camp, the roadway, the battle line with victims, young and old. Still others, learning wisdom by study of the battle itself, are preparing to use the enginery of the Destroyer to defeat him. Recognizing that economic organization and co-operation are the means by which monopoly has been created and now rules, these wiser ones are preparing to "fight the Devil with his own fire."

UPON this basis is founded the Right Relationship League, recently incorporated in Chicago, "to teach and promote the practice of co-operation." Perceiving that a ghastly semblance of economic brotherhood, approximate equality, and mutual helpfulness for selfish ends of private profit has come to be not only successful but profoundly indispensable to any business survival at all, the League proposes to test at once the economic success value of actual brotherhood, and the actual brotherhood value of the present development of economic evolution taken in good faith and with a motive, essentially religious, of bringing men into not *better*, but *RIGHT* relationships. Assuming that the chaos in the distributive system is slowly taking on a semblance of order at the behest of selfishness for private gain, the League proposes to make use of the chaos and the process developing unto a false order for the bringing about of a true order in the righteousness of real brotherhood.

SPACE is not available in this issue of THE COMMONS for a detailed description of the

League's basis of appeal or its plans for taking possession of distribution in the name of Brotherhood. We shall have occasion, from time to time, to dwell upon various aspects and developments of the plan. Its first and most striking application (though by no means is the League's program thus confined) is to the country store, and the writer of this present article is most impressed with that aspect of the League's plan, because it would have seemed that the rural district would be the last and most hopeless of awakening. In the cities, with their augmenting intensity of economic strife, the sense of the need of reorganization of industry and distribution is widely spread and deeply felt, and moreover, the very organization itself is well under way. To our mind, the possibility now of educating and organizing whole rural communities at once at small expense and with wide-spread advantage to all concerned, is not only attractive, but exceedingly plausible. We cordially refer our readers to the League headquarters* for literature and information in detail, requesting correspondents in writing to the League, to mention this article.

The League has just held at Mackinac Islands a conference of retail storekeepers, which discussed, among others, the following subjects:

Question—"Advantages of co-operative or united wholesale buying; the plan of the 'Associated Merchants U. S. A.'; also other examples."

Question—"Effect of co-operative distribution; Can co-operative stores render better service, with less expense, than privately owned competitively conducted stores?" Example: "Right Relationship League" plan; also "Rochdale" plan.

Question—Storekeeping a public function; Ethical and economic possibilities of public ownership and operation as contrasted with some of the wasteful practices and immoral consequences of private and corporate ownership of retail stores.

There was a satisfactory attendance and earnest interest was displayed in the discussion of the organization of co-operative stores. A general conference is talked of, to be held presently in one of the large cities.

The League has reprinted in leaflet form one of the best of Mayor S. M. Jones' addresses, under the title, "Equal Opportunities for All, Special Privileges for None." It is an unusually valuable address, and in size handy to enclose in letters. The League furnishes them on application for a two-cent stamp, or ten copies for ten cents.

We were in error in saying that Dr. Dorothea Moore was head of the Manse Settlement at Oakland, Cal. Dr. Moore is head of the South Park Settlement in San Francisco. Under her vigorous leadership the settlement thrives, and now has boys' club, two large buildings, shops, a gymnasium, etc. Chicago settlement folk remember Dr. Moore as one of the most efficient workers at Hull House.

*Right Relationship League Headquarters are in Medinah Temple, Jackson boulevard and Fifth avenue, Rooms 905 and 907, 237 Fifth avenue, Chicago.

MIDSUMMER JOTTINGS.

Many Items From Many Sources About Many Things.
Current Note and Comment.

Christodora House, New York, has a girls' "shirt-waist class."

The Philadelphia College Settlement has military drill in two of its clubs.

The aggregate attendance at Hartley House, New York, during the past year was 66,050.

Hale House, Boston, is having many "natural history trips" this summer with its clubs.

The Hiram House (Cleveland) paper, *Hiram House Life*, refers to the city playground question none too urgently as "A Question of Life and Death."

Orchestrion Hall, Racine, Wis., has issued an attractive little "Souvenir Annual," illustrated with views of interior and exterior of the building.

Welcome Hall, Buffalo, played a considerable part in the recent dock laborers' strike, seeing clearly the right of the strikers in the contest and having the unbounded confidence of the men.

The Cambridge House Magazine for June gives a list of five summer camps of which residents of Cambridge House are in charge, and still others are referred to as under the influence of this settlement.

Dr. Max West, a former resident of Chicago Commons, now attached to the division of statistics of the United States Department of Agriculture, has written a valuable monograph on "The Public Domain of the United States."

The report of the Visiting Nurse Association shows a good year's work done. This is one of the most useful and unobtrusive charities in Chicago. Copies of the report can be obtained at the rooms of the association, 907 Masonic Temple.

Mrs. Mary E. Sly, for five years head of the Northwestern University Settlement in Chicago, was presented with a loving-cup by friends in the neighborhood before she left the settlement. She is now at work in the Hull House playground.

"The common practice of commercial business is to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest. The Leeds directors followed the better rule of buying in the best market and supplying the poorest member with the best quality of food."

One of the keenest and most comprehensive studies of the social settlement from within is that of Miss Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, under the title "A Function of the Social Settlement." The paper was first published by the American Academy of Political and Social Science, and has since been printed in separate form. The price of the article separate is 25 cents, and it can be obtained by addressing the Academy at Philadelphia.

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JOHN P. GAVIT.

EDITOR.

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